6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

nineteenth century the *kalim* paid for a princess amounted to 500 rubles, and for widows, 300 rubles; for the daughter of a first-grade nobleman (*uzdens* of the first rank), 350 rubles; and for widows, 200 rubles.

Among the Circassian tribes of Shapsugs and Natukhais the *kalim* paid for a princess consisted of from 50 to 60 *skha;* and for a common girl, 25 *skha.* The standard value of a *skha* was approximately 60 to 80 oxen. Among those Circassian groups which had no gradations in the social scale, *kalim* could be paid with slave boys and girls; thus a princess cost from three to eight boys or girls, and a girl of common origin, one or two. In case slave children were not available, the *kalim* could be paid with a certain number of cattle or other domestic animals.

Among the Kabardians after the Russian conquest, the bride-price for a princess was 1,500 rubles; for the princess of a not-powerful family, 700 to 1,000 rubles; for the daughter of an *uzden,* 400 to 1,000 rubles; for a common girl, not more than 300 rubles.

Among the Chechens of Daghestan the bride-price is called *urdali.* The highest amount paid for a bride was 250 rubles, but in the time of Shamol, according to his orders, the bride-price was reduced until it reached the low figure of two cows.

Among the Ossets the bride-price is called *irad,* and was once very high, reaching even 1,000 rubles or 100 oxen in amount, but since the Russian conquest of the Caucasus it has declined in value, amounting in some Ossetic communities to the sum of 440 rubles. In 1866 a special meeting was held of the three communities of northern Ossetia, where the normal amount of the bride-price (*irad*) was fixed at 200 rubles. Formerly, in cases where the groom had no means to pay for his bride, he could pay with his labor. He was obliged to work for the family of his future wife for eight years.

The bride-price is paid by the Pshavs generally with cows: from three to five cows for a single girl and not more than three cows for a widow. A Pshav girl normally marries at the age of 17 to 20 years. In the old times the choice of a husband was made by her parents and she was obliged to marry the man of their

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RII Georgia RII

584 choice, whom she saw for the first time at the wedding ceremony. Later, however, her personal preference and consent were taken into consideration, although the will of the parents has always been the deciding factor. All necessary arrangements for acquiring a bride are made, not by the groom and his parents, but through a specially chosen match-maker, called *machankali,* who is well known to the family as an honest and respectable person. The negotiations of the *machankali* with the parents of the bride are not for a brief period, but on the contrary last for a long time. The interval between the first negotiations by the *machankali* and wedding-day is occupied with special arrangements, known as: (1) the encouragement; (2) the promise; and (3) the betrothal. The encouragement, called *daimedeba* from the Georgian word *imedi* (hope), is the information given to the bridegroom in an indirect way, that although the parents of the bride have not given their consent, they may accept his proposition of marriage. The promise, called in Georgian *agreoba,* is obtained by the *machankali* on his second visit to the house of the bride. And the final act of the matchmaking is the ceremony of the betrothal, called *nishnis datchra,* or simply *nishani.*

The first procedure of the matchmaking, the encouragement (*daimedeba*), is not obligatory and can easily be broken; but the Pshavs consider it obligatory to fulfill the promise (*agreoba*) and the betrothal (*nishnis datchra*).

In case of consent to the marriage by the bride's relatives, the acceptance of the proposal is registered by the characteristic hand-striking, the exchange of kisses, and the payment by the match-maker (*machankali*) of the special sum of money—one ruble and twenty kopeks in silver—as a token of betrothal, the *nishnis datchra* or *nishani.*

The betrothal (*nishnis datchra*) has among the Pshavs the character of a juridical transaction, and the failure by the father of the bride to fulfill his accepted obligations is regarded as a breach of contract and the bridegroom has the right to demand from him the indemnity for such dishonor, called *saupatio jarima* from the words *pativi* (honor) and *jarima* (indemnity). The indemnity (*saupatio jarima*) consists of fifteen cows. But in case

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

the girl is later given to the groom after the refusal, the indemnity required is only half the original—eight cows.

In a breach of promise case the bridegroom has two ways of acting, either to kidnap the girl or to appeal to the popular justice at the national shrine, *Khati* of *Lashris jvari*. The attendants of the sanctuary, the *khevis-beri*, and the elders of the community act as judges. If the bridegroom is able to prove with the testimony of witnesses that he received a promise from the parents of the girl and the accomplishment of the betrothal, then the bride is awarded to him and the girl has no right to oppose the decision of the tribunal. It is necessary to mention that the bride is not present at the proceedings of the court, and everything is done in her absence and without asking her consent about the matter.

If the girl is abducted after her betrothal by another man, the ravisher has to pay the fine of fifteen cows and the girl's parents are freed from the obligatory payment. And the girl is punished by her parents through their officially excluding her from the native community, usually for a term of two years, although the time can be made shorter. This custom is known under the name of *moikvethavs*. The exclusion from the community is regarded as heavy punishment, having not only an economic but principally a moral and religious foundation, leaving the individual without any support or protection. This is not difficult to understand if we take into consideration the structure of the social organization, the importance of religion in the communal life and the position of the individual in society.

The first step of the reconciliation is for the abductor of the girl to send an envoy to the parents of the girl with a special present consisting of an ox and a sheep, called *khar-tskhvari* from the Georgian words *khari* (ox) and *tskvari*, meaning a sheep. Besides the *khar-tskhvari*, he has to pay also the *saupatio jarima* mentioned above.

The kidnaping of a woman is regarded by the Pshavs, and generally by all groups of the Georgian Highlanders, as a disgrace, not only to the woman's family, but to the whole of her community, and therefore, immediately after the abduction, the young people of the village take their pursuit, well armed and ready to fight.

583 Frequently there are bloody encounters if the pursuers succeed
622 in overtaking the fugitives. The pursuit is continued till the precincts of the village of the ravishers are reached. After this the kinsmen of the woman enter into negotiations with the kidnaper and usually the affair ends with the payment of indemnity and obligations as decreed by custom. Favorable results in negotiations are easily reached if the abduction has been made with the consent of the woman; in the contrary, the procedure is complicated and continues for a long time, with bloody encounters. And in the kidnaping of a married woman the consequence is the blood feud in which take part, not only the family of the woman but all the community, and the only satisfaction in this case is the death of the culprit and the return of the woman. As an illustration, we may cite a passage from the work of I. A. Bartolomei,[3] who during a journey in Svanetia was cordially entertained by the nobleman, Dadash Japaridze, who was not himself taking part in the general good time and conversation. "He related to me the cause of his grief," writes Bartolomei; "his house was deeply offended, requiring bloodshed and vengeance. Not long ago the young wife of his son was kidnaped by a nobleman from Lechkhum. Until she is returned, the family of Japaridze will be covered with a shameful stain which cannot be washed away even with blood. 'If the whole of this mountain,' said the old man to me, pointing out the mountain Elbrus at the foot of which we were staying, 'were transformed into gold and given to me in exchange for my dishonor—even then I would not be satisfied. God sees we are real Christians, but we cannot bear the insult to our family and until they return to me my daughter I will revenge till the last breath of my life.'"

584 In order to avoid the grave consequences of the abduction of a
589 bride, the Pshavs have as a remedy the custom of announcing in public gatherings the betrothal of certain couples. This custom is called the *kvethilshi chasma*. If a girl announces publicly as the betrothed of a certain man that she does not like him, she has the right not to marry him, according to the custom prevailing for

[3] Bartolomei: 99.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1

such an occasion. She may use this custom for her advantage and be freed from compulsory marriage, on the condition that she publicly takes a vow to remain single forever. The vow consists of the following words, in English translation: "I swear by the names of all saints, by the *Lashris jvari*, and by the name of *Thamar Pirmze* that I am determined to stay single forever!" After this she is called by the people a *motsmindari;* she has no right to marry, and is obliged to stay single. Some girls (*motsmindaris*) have even discarded the feminine dress and habit of life. They have dressed themselves in men's clothes, carried arms as every man does in Pshavia, and have even taken part in drinking parties and war expeditions. The last representative of such *motsmindari*,[4] died in 1885 in the village of Khushkheti. Her name was Tsukia.

Some time later, after the betrothal, the Pshav bridegroom sends to the parents of his bride five *chapi*[5] of wine and one sheep; this is called *sakhlis sanakhavath* meaning the house visitation. After this the relatives of the bridegroom, together with their friends and neighbors, say beforehand special prayers for the occasion, and go to see the bride. They take with them six *chapi* of wine, bread, brandy (*araki*), and two sheep. This visitation is called *mosakithkhi*, meaning to inquire after, it is also called *rigtsesi*, meaning order. Besides this provision, all of the visitors carry some present for the bride, so the women give woolen and silken stuff, rings, ear-rings, etc., and the men present money, not less than one ruble in silver each.

The relatives of the bride add their own food to the victuals brought by the guests and entertain them with liberal hospitality. The next day, the father of the bride invites his friends and the *khevis-beri*, who kills the sheep sent by the bridegroom, lights the candles, and prays God's blessing upon the marrying couple. After the prayer the bride is led out from the house and seated on a chair in the middle of the yard, surrounded by all the guests. Then, from the assembled guests there is chosen a man known for the quick smartness of his tongue and mind as the official talker

[4] Khizanashvili: 132.
[5] *Chapi*—a measure containing 20 bottles.